

HD

197

1851a



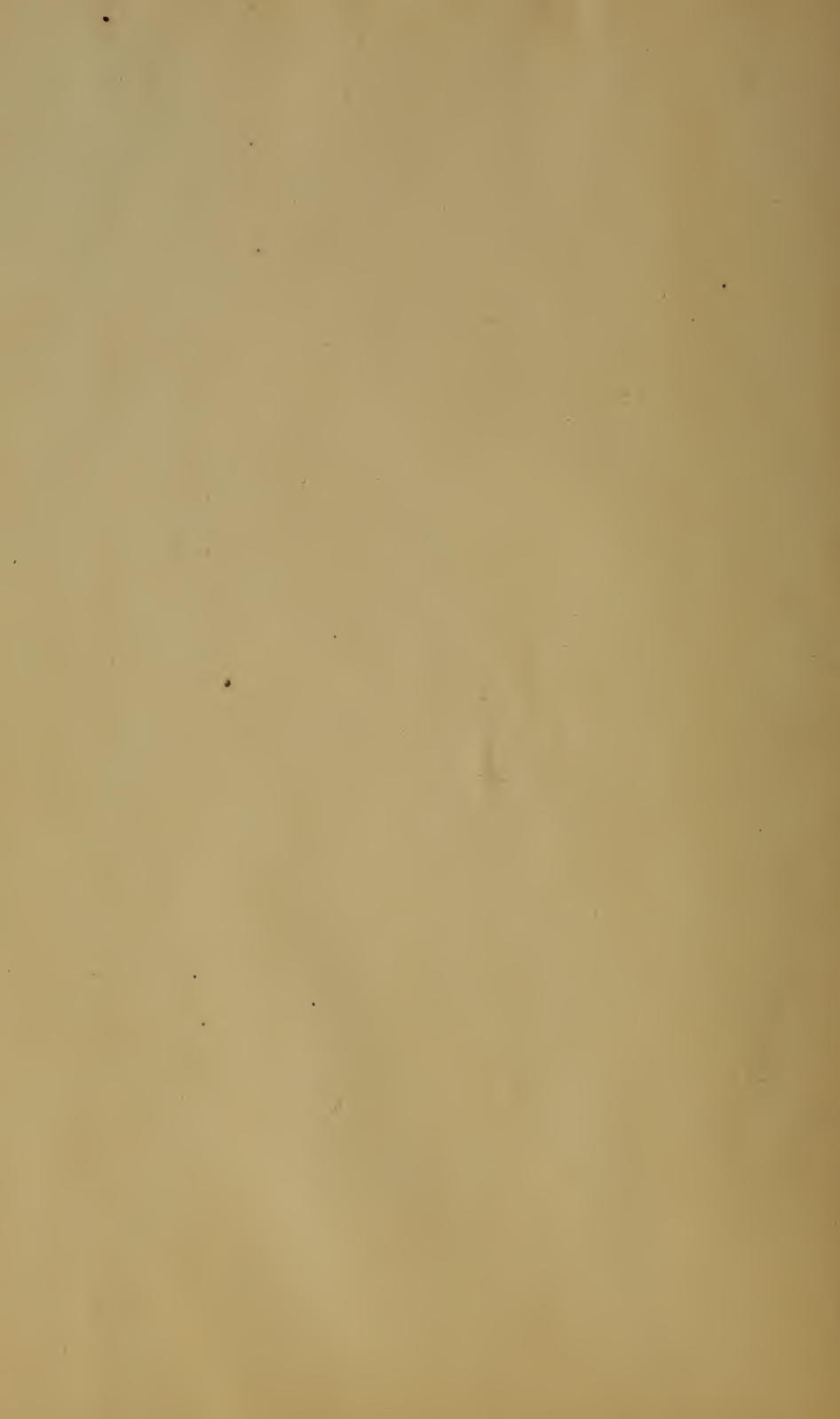
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. HD197

Shelf 1851 a

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.





SPEECH

OF

MR. WALKER, OF WISCONSIN,

ON

*The bill to Cede the Public Lands to the States in which they lie,
on condition that such States shall severally convey the
same to actual occupants only, in limited quanti-
ties, for cost of survey, transfer, and
title muniments, merely.*

DELIVERED IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES, JAN. 14 & 15, 1851.

WASHINGTON:

PRINTED BY JNO. T. TOWERS.

1851.

25.10
5375 ✓

1851

H 1197
1851a

THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
LIBRARY
MADISON, WISCONSIN

THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

WATSON
LIBRARY

2283107

S P E E C H

O F

M R . W A L K E R , O F W I S C O N S I N ,

O N

T H E B I L L T O C E D E T H E P U B L I C L A N D S T O T H E
S T A T E S I N W H I C H T H E Y L I E .

D E L I V E R E D I N T H E S E N A T E O F T H E U N I T E D S T A T E S , J A N . 1 4 & 1 5 , 1 8 5 1 .

The Senate having under consideration, as in Committee of the Whole, the bill to cede the Public Lands to the States in which they lie, on condition that such States shall severally convey the same to actual occupants only, in limited quantities, for cost of survey, transfer, and title muniments, merely,

Mr. WALKER said:

Mr. PRESIDENT: It will not be denied by any one that the Senator from Michigan (Mr. FELCH) has entertained us with an able argument on his side of the subject under consideration. But his side—as I expected it would be—is the financial or money side *only*, and he has shown us but *one* side of that; but has done this with much ability. My side of the question is that which lies deep in the principles of political economy and the rights of the citizen; not, however, disregarding financial or pecuniary considerations—but holding these but secondary to the other. In presenting these, I shall present the view neglected by the Senator. He shall also hear an answer to everything he has said, in the remarks I propose to submit; but as to any special answer or reply, it will be but incidental in passing. My main object at this time is to advocate the rights of labor as connected with the measure under discussion. I must, therefore, crave the Senator's pardon and forbearance when I take leave of his speech, able as it is of its kind, with the observation—that it was such conservatism as his which so long perpetuated the practice of imprisonment for debt; and still perpetuates, in too many localities, the right of the creditor to tear the bed from the feeble mother, and the cradle from the still more feeble and defenceless infant. It is the rust upon the shield of a by gone age; it must give place to the motto upon the shield of the present—"ONWARD! ONWARD!"

The doctrine and theory of all civilized governments have been, that the *absolute* or *positive* rights of the people should be deemed of *first* and *paramount* importance—and the first to be *defended* and *protected*. The difficulty has always been, however, that this principle was known in doctrine and theory *only*—but never carried out in *practice*. Nor, sir, will it ever be so carried out, until rulers and statesmen discover and acknowledge another truth: that from these absolute or positive rights—by which I mean life and personal freedom—there result also, *certain absolute or positive wants and necessities*—alike in all men, whether affluent or destitute, and which cannot be resisted—such as of *food, clothing, and shelter*. These wants and necessities should receive the *first* care and attention of Government; while such desires merely, as are of a *relative* or *incidental* kind—by which I mean such as concern and pertain to trade, commerce, wealth, and luxury—should receive but a secondary consideration. The first *cannot* be neglected, and man enjoy his *positive* rights: but the second *may*, and his *pleasures* only suffer.

But every political historian and economist knows that the case has been directly reversed in practice—that man's absolute wants and necessities have been comparatively neglected, while the relative, incidental wants and desires of great classes, have been met and provided for by the best energies of Government. Hence we find under the British crown—particularly in Great Britain and Ireland—that while thousands upon thousands have starved, or gone without necessary food, clothes, shelter and education—wealth and luxury, trade, commerce, and manufacture have been promoted, protected, and fostered by all the machinery of summary eviction and clearance; distress for rent; primogeniture and strict-entail; game laws, church rates and tithes; uncontrollable banks, with more uncontrollable national debts; the most expensive navy of the world, with burdensome taxation and onerous duties—and these, too, upon the very bread of life, until recently.

The same crushed condition of the people, so far as regards their positive necessities, will be found under all the governments of Europe; and, condemn the idea as you will, the fact exists—that the great cause of this is, *the disregard shown to these necessities of the people, in class-legislation, and the encouragement given by Government to LAND MONOPOLY AND AGGREGATION.*

But why this implied censure upon England and Europe—when, turning our eyes to our own country, we find so little less to complain of? Here, as in Britain, are thousands, and will be millions in want and destitute misery. Here, as there, the mere incidental wants and desires of wealth, luxury, class, commerce and manufacture are fast engrossing the fostering care and protection of Government, to the entire exclusion and disregard of the resistless wants of human nature. In pursuit of this policy, you have already created a naval establishment—the expense of which, for this year, is estimated at NINE AND HALF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS! Your customs establishment has cost a *hundred millions more*; and the administration of your customs costs, in addition, *two millions annually!* Your army list and war establishment *cost ten and a half millions more*—increasing as time and years roll on! How much you have expended, and will expend for the protection of commerce on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts—for harbors, fortifications, sea-walls, breakwaters, buoys, beacons, light houses, dry docks, and coast surveys—God only knows! But when you come to western lakes and rivers—to the region of agriculture and labor—where the *producer* is interested in facilities for shipping his products, and in receiving with facility, safety, and cheapness, imported articles and home manufactures for consumption—*there* you would have it *unconstitutional* to expend a dollar for the protection of commerce. You have established institutions for the education of your military and naval officers at *Government expense*, while you have but rudgingly doled out the “*sixteenth section*” for the education of laboring multitudes. Millions upon millions of the public domain have been expended—chiefly for the benefit of capital and corporations—in the construction of Rail-Roads and canals; but *not one acre* has ever been appropriated to promote the direct interests of agriculture or the mechanic arts.

Your class legislation and favoritism are of the same tendency and character here, as in England and Europe—but far less excusable; for here you *profess* the doctrine of *equality*. You appropriate \$20,000 to *one* army or naval officer for his invention of an apparatus with which to elevate and point your cannon; and hundreds of thousands more to enable *another* to “experiment” with his invention of a submerged wheel for your war-steamers. But on the other hand, two poor, but ingenious mechanics—Wright and Blanchard—have been literally robbed and plundered of the two most useful and beautiful inventions of the day. You appropriate \$20,000 to *one* professor, to “enable” him to “experiment” with and *perfect* his invention of the *electro-magnetic telegraph*; and \$20,000 more to *another*—and a Government officer, also—for *experiment* with his *electro-magnetic engine*. But when the destitute mechanic and inventor makes his appearance—having expended his last farthing, and the toil of years, to perfect his invention—he is referred to the Patent Office for the only favors and privileges to be obtained. There, after having *paid* the fee of thirty dollars—which, perhaps, he has borrowed, and one third of which he must now forfeit—he is informed that his specification and claim are informal; that his drawings and model are insufficient; that he must employ a “patent-agent” to perfect his papers and drawings, and a model maker to construct a new model. He has no more money for these purposes, but he has good *sense*. He inquires—what has been done with the immense fund which must have accumulated

from the sums paid into the office by inventors'—is no part of it appropriated to employ persons to draught papers and drawings for those who cannot do it themselves? He is answered no; but is informed that up to 1st January, 1849, a surplus fund had accumulated to the amount of \$216,468, a small part of which would have answered the purposes mentioned—but that Congress had *higher* uses for the fund, and appropriated \$8,000 of it to pay “for collecting agricultural statistics”—*not to advance the interests of agriculture*, however,—but simply to collect statistics of what agriculture had reached by its own *unaided and unencouraged energies*. One thousand dollars more for “a chemical analysis of the various substances used as food by man and beast;”—not to furnish them food, or facilities for obtaining it—oh, no!—but simply to analyze what they *did* eat—to furnish employment and support for another professor, while he ascertained for the common herd of men and beasts, the quantity of gelatin, albumen, and fibrin in a beef’s shank or a pig’s foot; of glutin and starch in a watery potato; and of prussic acid in a red cabbage. He is further informed that the whole remainder of the fund, to the amount of \$207,468, was appropriated—with \$32,532 in addition—to build marble wings to the Patent Office; not, however, for the *use* of the Patent Office, or of the mechanic and inventor—for the present building were ample for the purpose, if it were devoted to it—but for the use of the “Interior Department,” and of a “National Institute” or museum, in which to deposit the bugs and lizzards, snakes, alligators, and orang-outangs, brought home by your various EXPLORING EXPEDITIONS!

The patent claimant suggests, perhaps, that this is all wrong; that if no part of the fund can be applied to lighten some of the burdens of *his* class—at least the fees and deposits required should be reduced, and no further surplus be allowed to accumulate, but remain in the pockets of the inventor. The Commissioner, however, assures him *this* can never be done—and refers him to the last PATENT REPORT, where it is actually recommended that the fees, deposits, and forfeitures be increased—some of them, *one hundred per cent.*

After having every impediment thrown in his way, and receiving neither look nor deed of encouragement, the man turns away with unavailing sorrow and disappointment—the anticipations and hopes of years, perhaps of life, blasted by the blow. He casts a furtive glance at the Capitol: *it is, indeed, but furtive!*—he sees no hope of favor there; he is neither an official professor, nor a Naval or Army Officer. He mentally muses with himself, and wonders what crime he or *his class* can have committed, that there should be such a distinction made. He thinks of the plow, the steam-engine, the cotton-gin, power-loom, and locomotive; he looks around upon your public edifices, and dwellings of ease and comfort—upon your ships of war and commerce—upon the very stones of the payment at his feet, and remembers—*that all were produced, constructed, or placed by minds and hands like his.* He therefore feels more keenly the injustice of your partiality—tastes more bitterly his own subject inferiority.

Sir, I refer to these instances and cases only to illustrate your unjust and impolitic discriminations in favor of wealth, class, or station. I could proceed for the day to enumerate instances, and classes of cases to prove, that the wants of the necessitous working classes are either totally neglected, or insultingly slurred, at the same time that the merest incidental desires of wealth and station are cared for and gratified with the most scrupulous politeness and promptness.

Sir, would you learn and practise the remedy?—would you produce content and happiness, and render firm and secure the institutions of your country?—you must reverse your policy and practice—turn your attention *first* to the wants and necessities of the people as MAN, irrespective of his relations to wealth or station. Meet and provide for *these* wants, “and all things else will be added.” I do not mean by this that you should provide by direct contribution; far from it. The intelligent workingmen of the country desire no such thing—they would scorn the proposition. Besides, they know full well, and by experience, that most of what you have to contribute—as in the case of the patent fund—was first drawn from their labor and pockets. But what they do desire—what they *demand* is, that you cease your class and job legislation; that you pass laws to operate equally upon all, and execute them with impartiality, that *they* may not be starved—but may have a fair chance in the race of enterprise. But above all, and as a means to this end, they demand that you shall no longer usurp the useful domain of the soil, and exclude them from a *rightful* occupancy of earth—leaving them but charity or sufferance tenants to those upon whom you now lavish your unneeded bounty; but

that you surrender it to their free occupancy, as a means to them of life and independence—securing, at least, the indispensables of food, raiment, and shelter, through the exercise of their own energies and industry. They demand your negative action only—that you shall not *affirmatively* or *positively* oppress them. To this they are entitled—this they *will* have. In their name I now tell you, that you must and *shall* reform the Government to this extent: the reasons shall appear more manifest before I close. Grant *this* reform, and they will never ask *you* for contributions.

But you may say, the scheme as proposed—embracing free land, homestead exemption, and land limitation—is impracticable. Sir, this is but the tyrant's answer to the call for reform in every age. Impracticable! Why, sir, it is not new; it was practised centuries ago. Its reverse—land monopoly—was only introduced with kings and monarchs—its abandonment was the main cause of the fall of more than one ancient republic. The wonder of the wisest men has been, that it should *not* have been practised through all ages since! I will present the views of one of these—than whose, the mind of no man ever ranged more widely through Nature: I mean the great and good St. PIERRE. I read from his "STUDIES OF NATURE," No. 7. In speaking of the evils and wretchedness occasioned by large landed accumulations in France, he says:

"I have been astonished that there is no law in France to prevent the unbounded accumulation of landed property. The Romans had censors, who limited the extent of a man's possessions to seven acres, as being sufficient for the subsistence of one family." "As ROME increased in luxury, it was extended to 500; but even this law was soon infringed. and the *infraction hurried forward the ruin of the republic*"

He might have said the same of ATHENS and SPARTA.

"Conquerors have always met with feeble resistance in countries where property is unequally divided. Overgrown estates destroy the spirit of patriotism in those alike who have *everything* and those who have *nothing*. 'The shocks of corn,' said Xenophon, 'inspire those who *raise* them with courage to *defend* them. The sight of them in the field is as a prize exhibited in the middle of the stage to crown the conqueror.'"

"Such is the danger to which excessive accumulation of property exposes a State outwardly; but the internal mischief it produces among the citizens, and on the state of lands, is not less to be deplored. It is not upon the face of vast dominions, but in the bosom of industry, that the FATHER of mankind pours out the precious fruits of the earth."

"Enormous property causes poverty all over the kingdom. * * * In many places there is no employment for the peasantry during a great part of the year; but I shall insist only on their *wretchedness, which seems to increase with the riches of the district they inhabit.*"

"The district of Caux is the most fertile country in the world. Agriculture on the *great* scale is there carried to the height of perfection; but * * * you find *unbounded affluence* on the one hand and *extreme indigence* on the other."

I shall not now go further into the general principles of this measure, but shall content myself with discussing more in detail than formerly, its practical bearings and the necessity of its adoption for the safety of the country and the people. It will be found far more practicable to adopt and enforce it, than to perpetuate the republic a century longer without it.

Its practical bearings are most important in their effects upon the old States which contain no public land; and should be considered first, in view of the objection *that the measure proposes to take what belongs to the whole, and give it to a part*. This objection involves a consideration of two questions: first, that of constitutional power; second, that of justice and expediency.

The first question is easily disposed of; for, by the constitution itself, Congress has the express power "to dispose of, and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory and other property belonging to the United States." It is, after all, but a question of discretion in Congress, to be determined by the answer to the second question—that of justice and expediency. This, again, must turn upon a just conception of the compensating equivalents of the measure, considered in its broadest view. Now, if it can be shown that there are equivalents in the measure, fully or more than compensating the old States for the loss they would sustain by it, then the question is settled in the affirmative—that the measure is both just and expedient, so far as those States are concerned. I shall now endeavor to show this; and, to do so, shall show it to be their true interest to promote the production of the West.

The old northern States are, properly speaking, not agricultural-producing, but commercial and manufacturing States. Most of them, it is true, engage more or less in agriculture; but they are not, and never can be, the chief producing States. These, for one class of products, must ever be the inland States—mostly those of the Mississippi valley. The old States of the North are commercial, by reason of their proximity to the

Atlantic sea-board; they are manufacturing, because of their great supply of water-power, coal, and minerals; they are *both* commercial and manufacturing, because both pursuits combined, constitute for them a better interest than agriculture, if their lands were even adapted to the latter pursuit.

As to the old southern States, the North and West produce what they *do not*—they produce what the North and West *cannot*. Each is interested, therefore, in the largest production by the other.

Now, every commercial and manufacturing community is interested in having country tributary to it, which produces, largely, the raw material of its fabrics and the staples of its commerce. I do not use the term *tributary* in its national-law sense; but in that sense only which implies a necessity, from natural causes, of dependence in the tributary country, for *facilities* in its main pursuit. In this sense, we of the West—particularly of the Northwest—are, and ever shall remain, tributary to the Atlantic States, if we adhere to agriculture. We must always use and pass their channels and avenues of commercial transport in reaching market with our surplus. Where a large agricultural surplus is produced, neither the greatest profit nor loss is made or sustained in the mere production—but in the manufacture of the products, and in the carrying and barter trades connected with them. With our tributary position, these profits must always be monopolized by the old States; and the greater our production, the greater the profit thus realized by them. Hence it is plain that the more western land you can put under cultivation, and the more producers you can establish there, the more you enhance the interests of the commercial and manufacturing States in the items mentioned. But, further, you vastly increase the ability of the class you would send there, to purchase and consume the fabrics of the North, and the peculiar products of the South. If the population and production of the West should be doubled, the mutual interests of the North and South, in all these particulars, would be doubled also; and so on, in like progressive and corresponding proportions.

But, if the argument be still deemed fallacious, let me test it by another general argument. What, sir, is it but a knowledge and acknowledgment of my positions that has caused the Atlantic States to vie with each other in extending their public works toward the western country? Can it be possible they would have done so had there been no West? No; they have been and are so acting with a view to making their works the channels—and their cities the marts of western trade. Would New York and Massachusetts now—if they could have rolled back upon them all their immigrant people, with all the wealth they took away—consent, in view of their pecuniary interests, to see the West depopulated, and its production stopped? No, sir—not if you would give them, to-boot, the entire cost of their western public works in money. If there were no West, they would have to lay up one-third of their boats and shipping, and diminish full one-third their manufactures. Comparative silence would reign, where now the tireless locomotive, never resting, rolls, and commerce floats. When the West has advanced fifty years, they would not, for the sake of their commercial and manufacturing interests, set her back ten if they could; and it would promote their true interest to advance her in population and production fifty years in five, if in their power. Away, then, with your petty jealousies of the growing greatness of the West! While we remain of the same family politic—and God grant we may ever so remain!—our greatness is your greatness; the prosperity of each, is mutual—our destinies, the same.

(The Senate here adjourned, and on the next day Mr. WALKER resumed as follows:)

Mr. President, I have so far used but general arguments to prove the interest which the old States have in the measure before us; but let us now try figures. The net proceeds of the public land sales for 1849, were \$983,343. If this were distributed directly to the States according to population, New York would receive about \$143,000 only—supposing the population of that State to be 3,250,000, and of the Union 22,500,000. Now, assuming the freight on the Erie canal for the same year to have been no greater than for the year 1846, the down-freight from Lake Erie was 506,830 tons, and the up-freight 49,000—making an aggregate of 555,830 tons *for the new States alone*. On this, the State toll was 24 cents per hundred pounds—yielding to the State \$2,667,984 in tolls alone. The freight on this tonnage, over and above the toll, was 15 cents per hundred pounds—making \$1,667,490 more, paid to the *citizens* of New York for

freight. The whole amount of tolls on the Erie canal for 1847, was \$3,353,347, and on the other canals of the State \$302,033—total, \$3,655,380. To show that I have not over estimated the relative proportion of western commerce to the aggregate, I will state, that 1,431,252 tons were forwarded in the same year from Lake Erie alone, and reached tidewater; while only 313,031 tons reached tidewater in New York from all other quarters. No one can fail to perceive the immense importance of this trade to the State of New York, notwithstanding the West is yet in her infancy. What further New York and her people received from the thronging travel to and from the West; what more from the manufacture of western products; and what still more from the barter trade connected with them here and in foreign markets, cannot be known; but the amount must have been immense indeed. Immense as it may have been, however, it would be doubled in future, by doubling the production and population of the West.

The same may be said, to a great extent, in regard to most of the Atlantic States—classing Pennsylvania among them—if they will but strive for western trade as have New York and Massachusetts. Can they, then, desire to retard the growth of the West? Can such a degree of fatuity have seized upon them as to have rendered them blind to the deep and perpetual interest they have in settling the West with laborers and producers, and putting her lands under cultivation? Sir, if they owned those lands exclusively, it would redound to their interest to grant them free to actual settlement, and I have no doubt they would do it. France did so in Louisiana; Spain did the same in Florida and Mexico; and Mexico the same in her intendancies.

There is, then, no argument against the measure under consideration, to be drawn from any supposed injustice in it. It contains not only compensating equivalents, but remunerating inducements to the old States, to yield their acquiescence in its adoption.

But you may say, you possess and can retain all these advantages without ceding the public lands. We are arguing a question of *justice*; this argument sounds like one of right, based upon the score of our *necessities*. However, let it pass. That you possess these advantages I concede; that you can per force retain them, I deny. But suppose you could—is there no importance to you in having them doubled in ten instead of fifty years? Is the annual double of \$2,667,984, nothing to New York as a State, compared with \$143,000—her distributive share of the land-sale proceeds—and this received not directly, but incidentally only? But you cannot retain these advantages by your present policy. You will force us to become a manufacturing as well as an agricultural people; when you betide the commerce and manufactures of New York and New England, at least so far as the West and South shall be concerned! We have equal facilities with you in water power, and greater in steam—for we have cheaper combustibles. Our resources in coal, iron, lead, copper, timber, lumber, clay, and limestone are inexhaustible. We can beat the world in wool, flax, and hemp growing, and are nearer than you to the cotton region—with the broad Mississippi to float our interchanging products; its contributing branches—the Arkansas, Red River, Ohio, Wabash, Illinois, Missouri, and Wisconsin, and their tributaries—winding past our every domicile and hamlet; with railroads and canals in progress, to unite the whole. All we lack is capital, which we are fast acquiring, and shall soon have—the sooner by the defeat of this bill: for if we do not by its provisions receive as population such as desire, and will be contented with *small* possessions, we will receive those who, lured by the increasing value of western lands and resources, will bring capital with them, and employ it where there is less competition, with a view to obtaining *large* possessions. When we shall have capital, you will find no mean competitor in the mighty West in manufacturing; nor will Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore find trifling competitors in Charleston, Mobile, and New Orleans, as commercial marts. The latter is our *natural* mart anyhow, by reason of the downstream navigation, without toll or storms, to her very wharves; and the two former will be *more* naturally so than the Eastern cities named, when the great central railroad from Chicago to Mobile, with its branch roads, shall have been completed. As manufacturers, too, we will be in the centre of population and a home market, while we are far removed from competing imports, with which you will have to contend after the embarrassing withdrawal of your now Western and Southern market.

It will be perceived that we may be kept *voluntary*, but can never be made *compulsory* tributaries of the old Eastern States. Settle the public lands with an agricultural people, and we remain the former; *drive* us to manufacturing, and we will neither be that nor the latter.

The practical bearing of the measure upon the revenues of the Government, is of next importance. I will repeat a truism and opinion, expressed by me on a former occasion, for the purpose of briefly enlarging upon it—premising, however, that it is a little wonderful that it should not have struck the better sagacity of the Senator from Michigan, while presenting *his* side of the same subject. It is this:

“Until direct taxation shall be resorted to, the great and important source of revenue to the Government must be duties on foreign imports. Now, every one knows that the amount thus to be received is enhanced, as the number of consumers of foreign imports is increased. Hence I contend that the revenue would be increased by the policy proposed; for, by increasing the number of agricultural producers, you increase the number of import consumers, and their ability to consume—or, in other words, their ability to *purchase* for consumption. The Government, I have no doubt, would be the gainer in her revenue after *sacrificing* her receipts from the public lands.”

No one except the Senator will deny, I presume, that the measure would establish as producers, within the next ten years, at least five hundred thousand persons. Now, supposing that by the tenth year the ability of these persons to purchase and consume dutiable articles would be increased but \$50 each, here would be an increased consumption in value, of \$25,000,000. The increase of revenue from this source alone, at the present tariff of 30 per cent., would be \$7,500,000 for the year 1861. Add to this, \$836,152—the annual expense of the present land system, which would be saved to the Government—and you have an aggregate increase of revenue for that year alone, without estimating the intermediate increase and saving, of \$8,336,152. The *saving* alone for the whole period would be \$8,361,520. This is an increase of revenue, as BURKE would say, “through the political secretions of the country;” but the Senator from Michigan says it is but *one part of the community paying for what is enjoyed by the other*. It looks to me a good deal like an ample remuneration for liberal treatment and a just policy.

Now, sir, keep your lands, and what will they net you for the whole ten years? Let us see: As before stated, the net money proceeds for 1849 were \$983,343. This is greater than they will ever be again—particularly if you make the last issue of county land warrants negotiable. But take this amount, and multiply it through the whole term, and you have but \$9,833,433 for the *entire period*, compared to \$8,336,152, the increase and saving of *one year alone* under the measure proposed; and the additional saving for the time, of \$7,525,368—making an aggregate of \$15,861,520.

Such would be the comparative results under your present revenue system; but if resort be had to direct taxation, the revenue advantages of this measure to the Government, over the policy of keeping the lands unproductive and untaxable, would still be great. The extent cannot be calculated with certainty, but may be approximated. Then, assuming that the amount of land which would become individual property and subject to taxation, would be only three times the amount that would become so under your present policy—the amount in ten years would be about 150,000,000 of acres. Supposing this to be worth, settled, \$10 per acre, an *ad valorem* tax of only one mill to the dollar, or ten cents to the hundred dollars, would yield a revenue of \$1,500,000—increasing annually in amount, but diminishing in rate; and which, added to the expense saved, \$836,152, makes an aggregate of \$2,336,152, to be compared again with \$983,344 only—and that continually decreasing in amount to the Government. Add to this the vast national wealth which would be created by the encouragement and impetus given to agricultural production, and the pecuniary and revenue advantages of the measure we are discussing, will appear incalculable. Let one item suffice as an example: Suppose but one-fourth of the land I have mentioned, to be cultivated in wheat, in 1861, and to produce but ten bushels per acre, (it will produce from twenty to forty)—the value of this, at 80 cents per bushel, would be THREE HUNDRED AND TWENTY MILLIONS OF DOLLARS! And yet we have said nothing of horses, cattle, sheep, beef, pork, wool, cotton, sugar, rice, tobacco, hemp, flax, and the various other products of labor and agriculture—all of which constitute a vast source of revenue, as well as of individual comfort.

Perhaps the Senator from Michigan begins to perceive by this time, that there are two sides to this view of the question. If not, I must notice one other objection urged by him. It was this: “that the measure would depreciate property now held by States and individuals.” Why, sir, the very opposite would be its effect. In the country, as in the city, it is not the *price* demanded or paid for one lot of land, that increases the value of that adjoining; but the *improvements made, and the business done upon it*. Take

the land owner in a sparse settlement of the West; and could you do him a greater favor than to give the lands about him to those who would settle and improve them?—create a necessity for, and the means to support, schools, roads, mills, workshops, and villages? Or, take the New York and Boston Land Company, whose lands stretch across the State of Illinois; and could you benefit them more than by settling the lands about them, and hemming in theirs with improved farms? The same may be said of the school and other lands of the States. Why, really, sir, if I had not known better, I should have supposed, when the Senator was urging *this* objection, that he yet lived in *Maine*, instead of Michigan. As it is, I must think he has lived a very superficial observer. The property of the non-landholding State would be increased in value, through the increased importance of the commerce and trade of those States, as before stated. To you, therefore, of the old States, I repeat: You have every inducement to yield the measure under consideration. Why do you—why will you withhold it? It can be but from two other considerations: *that of political power, and that of herding and crowding your laboring population, UNTIL YOU CAN FORCE DOWN THE WAGES OF LABOR TO THE EUROPEAN STANDARD.*

In regard to the first of these, I again think you reason from false premises to erroneous conclusions. You may lose *relative* political power through this measure, by promoting the growth of the West; but this is inevitable, whatever policy you may pursue; for if the West do not receive your surplus poor and suffering population, it will receive, though not so soon, a full equivalent in numbers of your abler population. If you fear to suffer a *positive* loss of political power, by a diminution of your present numbers—remember, this would equally be the case whichever class the West might receive. But is this possible, or at least probable? When, for the same period of time, have you ever given off so many of your numbers to people the West, as since 1840?—and when, for a like period, have you ever increased so rapidly in population? Never. The reason is, the natural richness of the *West*, developed within that time, gives reputation and invites immigration to the *whole* country; which immigration, together with your natural increase, more than makes up your *loss* and *usual* increase.

If to accumulate and crowd a surplus laboring population, until you have driven it to European want and misery—until you have forced down wages to a European standard—be your motive for withholding the public domain from free settlement, you might as well—you had *better* abandon it, if you love your country. I tell you but what you know: this can never be done under *this* Government—it can never be done, *and this Republic stand*. You must fuse it into a tyranny or despotism first. Thank God! you have no power here, as in England, to transport men to Van Dieman's Land for seeking to obtain by combination a pittance for their labor sufficient to allay the cravings of nature. Nor dare you *do* what Louis Philippe *did* in '45—send the soldiery to work in place of the carpenters who had abandoned their employment, because they could not obtain for their labor a like pittance. You know *too well* the results of this to him.

But it can hardly be that this is with any one an actuating motive in his opposition to this measure. It would barely seem possible that an American could desire to see his countrymen rendered so wretched, as to be driven to labor in the mines or at the forge for fourteen cents a day—as in Sweden the laborer is compelled to do; or as in Russia, where, by the testimony of ERMAN, the laborer is compelled to toil at the forges or the mines of the Ural mountains, thirteen and a half hours per day, for eight and a quarter kopeks, (*less than a penny*.) if single, but with the addition of eighty pounds of rye-meal per month, *if he be a man of family*;—where the yearly wages of labor are but *four Prussian dollars!* Though this is bitter, cheerless toil to the laborer, its fruits are sweet to the Russian tyrant, as they doubtless would be to the American, who might desire a similar state of things at home. Those fruits are, that the Russian iron-master is enabled to manufacture iron, to transport it from the Urals in boats, three thousand miles to St. Petersburg—descending on the route nine hundred feet, reascending again six hundred more to the point of shipment—and to ship it thence four thousand miles to our shores; and here, after paying a duty of thirty per cent., to undersell the American iron-master, and return with wealth to revel in Russian luxury. These are the wages, and these the fruits of that system of toil, which such an American—if *such there be!*—would impose upon gaunt and houseless poverty. May providence put far hence the sunless day! When it shall come—and come it must as things now tend—the prophetic words of the Senator from Kentucky, (Mr. CLAY,) in his late speech at Lexington, will have been fulfilled. In speaking of the future, he says:

"The density of the population of the United States will then be so great—there will be such reduction in the price and value of labor—as to render it much *cheaper* to employ *free* than *slave labor*; and slaves, becoming a burden to their owners, will be voluntarily disposed of, and allowed to go free."

And are we, then, approaching so mournful a condition in the affairs of the working classes? Yes—it is too true! and as surely *will* we reach it as that other countries *have*, unless we use the preventive before it be too late. But before we reach it—though it may be soon—the triumph of oppression, accumulated wealth, and heartless luxury, over the struggles of the destitute for food and freedom—will have thrown this Republic, with its liberty and glory, into the dark receptacle of things that are no more—the past! Before this final triumph—poverty and toil will have made many fitful efforts for relief, and to be free; but power will gather power, and wealth increase in wealth, till crowded want, at last worn out and starved, must sink down in hopeless need and servitude. This *has* ever been the result in every land; it *will* be the result in this, unless you now, or soon, to some extent, withdraw your cares from the mere incidents of life, and class, and luxury, and turn them to the absolute and never-ceasing wants and demands of *man and nature*. To do this to any effect, you must secure to man *as man*, a *rightful* place on earth. Leave the great *mass* dependant upon the *few*, for a mere *charitable* tenure in the soil; and you leave them with but a charitable tenure in their lives or their liberties. But allow them a *certain tenure and right to its possession*, and they can use it for the purpose, at least, for which the Creator gave it—that of *independent self-subsistence*. From the earth each individual can obtain, if no more, his *food and raiment*, and on it have a *home*. With these he can hurl a yeoman's defiance at petty tyranny, defend the State, and advance the true glory of his country; while he rejoices that wealth exists to advance as well its splendor.

Who would not rejoice at so pleasing and peaceful a harmony in the political and social system? And yet it is but the consummation of true democracy—but the fulfilment of the designs of our fathers when they declared, that governments were established among men to secure the *absolute*, the inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, with which men were endowed by their CREATOR. Cement thus, the affections of the people to your Government and institutions, and the eternal pyramid stands not more firmly on its base, than will this Republic and the UNION, stand upon their foundation!

But as things now progress and tend, we can console ourselves with no so pleasing contemplation. We are hurrying on to a day of destitution and dependence to the laboring multitude, and of danger to the country, much faster than many would suppose, who suppose without reflection or investigation. We are approaching it much more rapidly than the flight of time, the increase of population, and the aggregation of land would seem alone to indicate. Improved machinery—a great and providential blessing in itself, under a properly regulated political and social system—is now performing labor which the most numerous laboring population could not perform. True, there is a slight compensation in the fact, that this does not consume the necessaries of life, and affords cheaper fuel and some other necessaries to the laboring poor in large cities; but if you exclude the poor and landless from the soil, and monopolize their labor elsewhere by machinery, *how are they to obtain of these necessaries even the superflux of luxury?*

In a report on manufactures, made in 1832, Mr. ADAMS estimates the mechanical machinery of Great Britain in 1815, to have been equal to the labor of *two hundred millions of persons!* It will now at least double the amount of that number, as will also that of this country. From data furnished by McCULLOCH, it appears that, with the present machinery, each hand in a cotton mill performs more work than two hundred could without it, eighty years ago. We have the testimony of FAREY and Dr. TAYLOR to the same purport. Reduce these performances to those of individuals, and you will find that the manual energies of ten-fold our present population would be unequal to them. From this we can appreciate our rapid increase in labor-numbers. Now, bear in mind that this machinery works in competition *with*, but rarely *for*, the laborer—and you will perceive the extreme justice and necessity of allowing him to turn for subsistence to the soil, when you have supplanted him in his labor by a machine. But much more plainly will you perceive this when you reflect that, in addition to the other embarrassments of the laborer, from competing machinery, you compel him to *sustain and foster that competition, by forcing him to pay a tribute or tariff of ten to forty per cent. upon its products!* Could there be a more glaring instance to show that, not only are the mere incidental wants of *wealth* held superior to the absolute wants or necessities of *man*—but that his very life's blood itself, or, if not his *blood*, his *bread* must be taken to minister to

and gratify them. In justice, cease to demand this tribute of the laborer, or make its payment optional, by allowing him the alternative of digging subsistence from the earth. Tariff protection *with* free land, *might* be consistent; but *without* it—NEVER!

But it may be said that the laborer receives an equivalent for the competition of machine labor, in the reduced price at which he is enabled to purchase the products of that labor for his own use and consumption. This would be *somewhat* true if it were not also a fact—that a *reduction of the price of machine products, produces a corresponding or greater reduction in the wages of manual labor.* Machinery over-produces, and consequently its products fall. The machine owner *will not* produce without a *profit*; he *cannot* lie idle without a *loss*. He therefore takes from the wages of his manual labor, not only what will meet the fall in machine products, but what will leave him a profit besides; and so goes on *producing* and *reducing*. A little struggle follows—a “strike” perhaps—but hunger, and the tearful appeals of hungry children or of aged parents, soon bring back the toiler to her scantier crust.

Now, sir, if land be dear, what alternative has the landless laborer in such an extremity, but to surrender his life or his freedom?—but to *starve, or become an abject dependant?* And land is sure to become dear. Machinery having driven so many from the bench, the anvil, and the workshop, to take refuge in the soil; like everything else, the soil becomes scarcer and scarcer in proportion to the demand—till at last it can no longer be had at living rates; for, *unlike* everything else, in which wealth is permitted to speculate, its quantity cannot be increased as the demand is enlarged. Starvation or passive dependence is the result to landless industry, while, in the language of LORD JOHN RUSSELL, “the higher classes advance in luxury beyond measure.” The world looks on, agape, and wonders why it is so! The true reformer—whose voice is rarely heard, and still more rarely heeded—may see and tell the cause, and point out the remedy; but no one hears—no one pities! Over the dying and the dead, the wheel, remorseless, rolls along! Great men sit supinely by and cry “All’s well!” or console themselves and their country with the reflection, that the *future* wretchedness and enslavement of their *own* race, are to prove the more wretched emancipation of *another, now* enslaved. Others will sneer at truths and facts so manifest—and which they cannot refute or answer—while they urge on labor to the brink and gulf I have mentioned, and claim at the same time that they are the only liberty-loving patriots of the land.

To illustrate the effects of land monopoly and machine labor, let us advert to the history of labor in England.

By a statute of EDWARD III, passed in 1350, the daily wages of farm-laborers were fixed at 3½d. At that period wheat was worth 5d. per bushel. Reaper’s wages were fixed by HENRY IV at 2d. per day: wheat being worth 6d. to 7d. per bushel; oxen, 12s. to 16s.: and butter three farthings per pound. In harvest-time a laborer could pay for a pair of shoes with a day’s labor, and with the wages of a week could buy cloth for a suit of clothes; or, with the same could buy four bushels of wheat. At a little later period, we find the British statutes mentioning “beef, pork, veal, and mutton” as “being the food of the poorer sort.” Now the value of a bushel of wheat is, and has long been, \$1 95; while a week’s wages are but about \$1 93. Beef is worth thirteen cents per pound; mutton, fourteen cents; a fat sheep, \$10 to \$12; butter, twenty cents per pound; and cheese, fourteen cents. Of course the laborer can have no comforts. “The farm-laborer is compelled to feed his family on potatoes and salt—a very little bread and lard, with some scalded milk.” He is doomed to toil incessantly to preserve mere animal existence; for the mind or the future he can make no provision. And this is labor’s life in Britain! The British Queen might well exclaim, with old King Lear—

“ Poor, naked wretches, wheresoe’er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your loop’d and window’d raggedness defend you
From seasons such as these? Oh! I have ta’en
Too little care of this.”

Cross the channel from England, and in Ireland the case is still worse. We have the authority of a speech made in Parliament, by Mr. HENRY GRATTAN, for saying, that there perished of starvation *over one hundred and sixteen thousand persons* during the late famine. Nearly as many perished in the famine of 1822. These are some of the frightful results of the causes I have mentioned, under the very throne of England, and within seven days’ sail of America!—in a country, too, with a population not exceeding thirty millions; while her best authorities admit her land to be capable of sustaining, in

high comfort, a population of *one hundred and eighty millions*, if the people were *allowed* to cultivate it;—in a country, furthermore, where “the higher classes have advanced in *luxury* BEYOND MEASURE!”

If, since Henry VIII., England has advanced beyond precedent, in luxury, useful knowledge, and the arts and sciences, it has been at this fearful expense to life and human comfort, through an almost total neglect of the wants and necessities of her people. While machinery has usurped the province of human labor, and cut off that source of human subsistence; legislation and land monopoly have cut off the only other—a resort to the bosom of the earth. We are treading fast upon her footsteps; and, under our present course of policy, cannot long boast a happier condition for our working poor. Still, there has existed no necessary cause in England, why her laboring population should be so wretched; and much less does such a reason exist here, why ours should ever be so. There are yet time and opportunity to prevent it, by removing the unnecessary cause which, unremoved, must *inevitably lead to it*.

But hitherto your policy and practice have been all wrong. Besides the partial and class legislation of which I have spoken, your public-land policy has been, from the beginning, to encourage large landed proprietorships and speculation, and to discourage settlement in small subdivisions for purposes of self-subsistence. By the ordinance of 1787, with which you began, you required the governor of the Northwestern Territory to be an owner of 1,000 acres of land; the secretary 500; three judges, each, 500; each member of the legislative counsel 500; and each representative 200. You first ordered the lands to be sold at \$2 per acre—one-half in quarter townships or 5,760-acre tracts—the other half in sections or 640-acre tracts. The sale in half and quarter sections was not authorized till 1804; and in half quarter sections, or 80 acre tracts, not until 1820—down to which time the price was continued at \$2. It was not until the 5th of April, 1832, that the man with \$50 only, could obtain an acre of the vast public domain; for it was then only that the sale in quarter-quarter sections, or 40 acre tracts, was allowed. Even then, or the next year, you required the humble purchaser to take an oath, appalling in its terms! This is the oath:

“I do solemnly swear that the land is intended to be entered for my *personal* benefit, and not in trust for *another*, and that the same is intended for the *purpose of cultivation*; and that I have not entered under the act of 5th April, 1832, or under the act of 2d March, 1833, at this or any other land office of the United States, any land in quarter quarter sections in my own name, or in the name of any other person—so help me God!”

Surely one would have thought the country might have spared the humble seeker of a home for himself or child, this last embarrassment and humiliation. From him who had the means and desire to purchase ten thousand acres, with which to speculate upon the necessities of his FELLOW-CITIZEN, no oath was required; but he who possessed but \$50, and who, from seeking to expend it for land, gave the best evidence of an intention to make it a home, and from it obtain an independent living—must *swear*, notwithstanding, that such was his design.

It has been your practice for a quarter of a century, to appropriate land by millions of acres, in alternate sections, to construct channels and avenues of commerce; and to make the laboring and producing settler pay for it in the increased price which you demanded of him for the alternates not appropriated.

But, sir, as if all this were not enough to foster speculation and embarrass productive industry, you have for the last four years been running wanton-riot in your legislation to promote the ends of land monopoly. You have issued millions upon millions in amount, of assignable Mexican bounty-land warrants—operating, not for the benefit of the soldier, but of capital—as a paper medium with which to monopolize on speculation the fairest portion of the people’s heritage. As if this were still not enough, last session you authorized the issue in warrants, of unknown millions more; and because you did not make *these* negotiable, mad fury rages among the horde of night-besetting, hound-tongued agents and speculators throughout the land; and members, as if casting no look to the future, are striving at this session to cut loose this last and only security to the soldier’s boon, that it, too, may be coaxed or torn from the hand of war-worn need. But above and beyond all, as the very crowning thought of wrong and folly—as if determined to plunge the country into Russian-labor bondage—some are now entertaining with serious complacency, the hideous project of giving, for a few cents per acre, OVER ONE HUNDRED MILLIONS OF ACRES TO ONE MAN, to “enable” him to make a railroad!—a territory equal in extent to the States of New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Delaware!

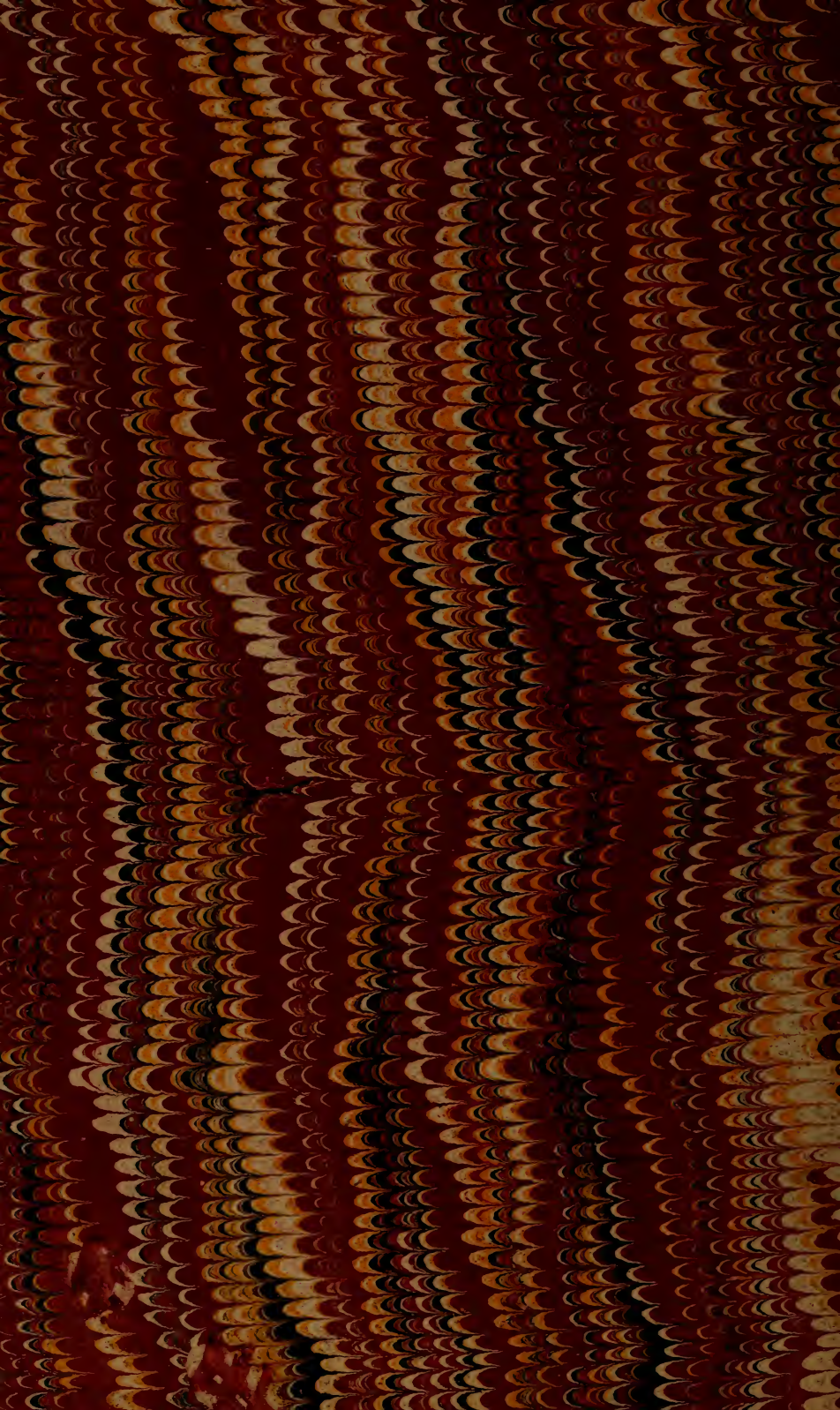
Sir, if I read aright the signs of the times, the working masses of the people have resolved that you shall change your policy and practice;—that you shall partly turn your cares from the exclusive thrall of luxurious incident. They are discontented and unhappy. Aside from present care and want, and that sense of dependence and subjection with which your class discriminations have depressed them, they feel and know—they cannot close their eyes to the fact—that the policy you are now pursuing portends a gloomier day in the future for them or their children. Already, where most crowded, the more favored are but able to obtain through the week, what at its close will procure the meanest comforts for their families. If sickness overtake them, or misfortune come—or if a few days work cannot be had—real destitution and suffering, or insolvable debts are the result. If they would go West, to the public lands—the asylum and refuge of distress—and have the present means to make the journey, they have no more; or, if they have a little more, knowing the expense and time of putting in even a small farm, they know *that* little will be exhausted; they despair of ability to buy the land when it shall come into market. They know that when their first stack is gone it will require all their earnings to support increasing family; that for some years they can lay up nothing with which to save their labor and improvements from the blood-lured grasp of the speculator. They consequently remain where they are—toiling on to an uncertain destiny; with no consolation from the past, few comforts or enjoyments for the present, and less, but more gloomy hopes for the future. They see that machinery is fast pushing them from the stage of human labor—that already their bread, to some extent, depends upon the price of machine products, and that price upon the amount of tribute or tariff they themselves are *forced* to pay to keep it up. As a substitute, they are offered no resource in the FIFTEEN HUNDRED MILLIONS of the public land; but are compelled to meet the certain, dread alternative of starvation, or comfortless dependence! Sir, disguise it as you may, there is none other left, unless you soon concede their right to freely dig subsistence, independence, and comfort from the earth. Do this, and their well-founded fears will be removed. Cease your favoritism in the blessings and bounties of government, and they will lose the sense of subject-inferiority with which your unjust discriminations have bowed them down.

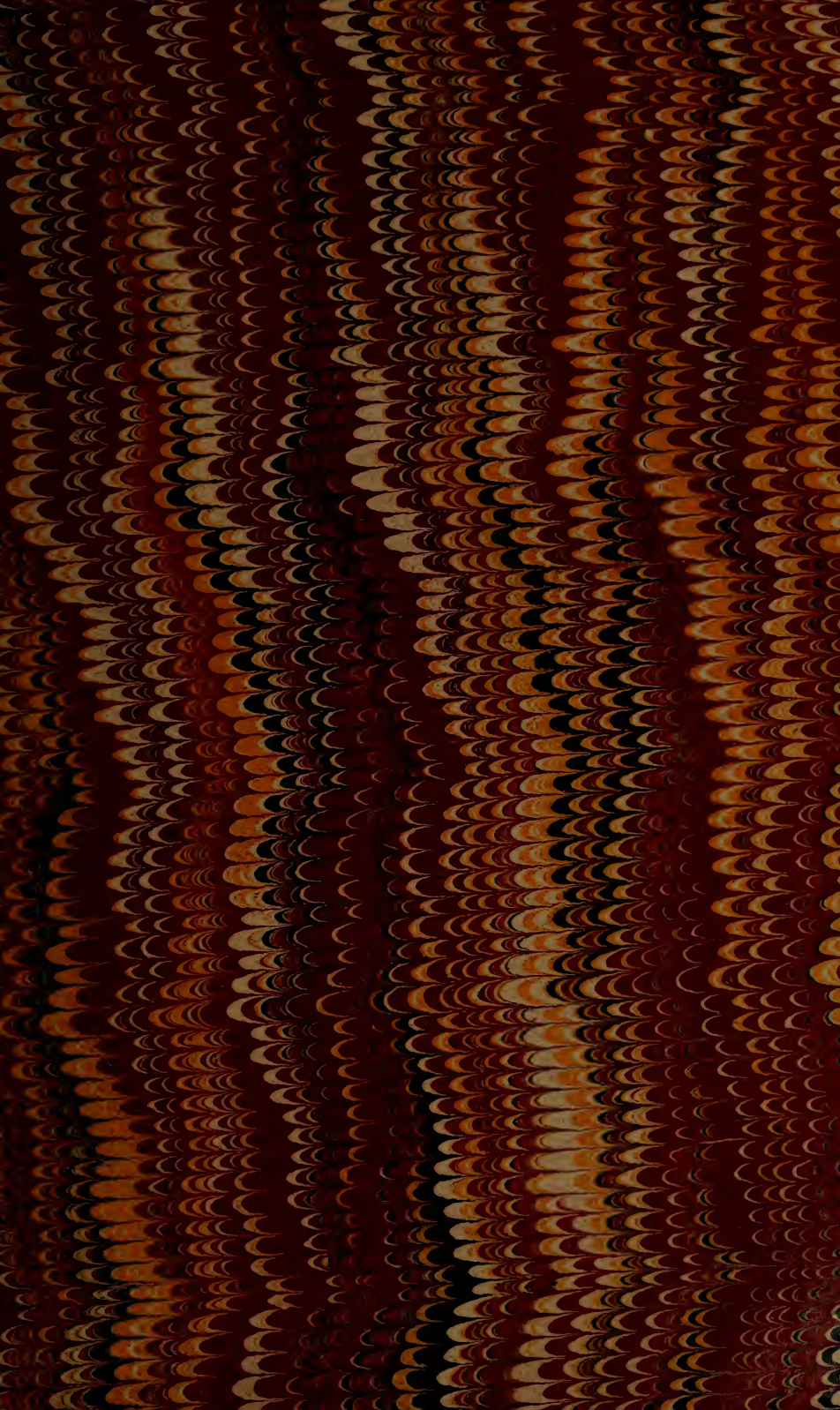
But, sir, you will never do these things *willingly*; yet you *will do them*. The working number—thanks to God and the *form* of our Government—hold the means to compel you! They hold the *ballots* through which you now hold *power*: the means which exalted you can humble you; and these means they have determined to employ. They have *already* begun; and the results are known, if the means of their accomplishment are not. If you would know what I mean, I refer you to the elections of last fall, held in New York, New Jersey, and Delaware. If you did not know it before, you are now told—THAT NATIONAL REFORM DEMOCRACY ELECTED THE MAJORITIES ELECTED IN THOSE STATES! I will tell you another truth, little as it is known—that HORATIO N. SEYMOUR *might now be governor of the Empire State, if he had not remained a mere negation upon the subject of human rights and necessities*. The working multitude have been long enough depressed by false and oppressive practices, following sweet and honeyed professions—they can be deceived no longer. They form no party of their own, but in combination practise what they preach. They have resolved to save their race from slavery, and their country from *worse* than monarchy. To these ends they have turned their attention, in earnest, to the absolute *rights* and positive *wants* of mankind. They have determined that *you* shall do the same, or surrender to those who will. It is for you to choose your alternative; for, as certain as the LORD liveth! you cannot much longer persecute, as you have done, the mass of America's workmen, for the "unreal wants" of luxury.

Sir, do not contemn this labor-movement of the people—it is not to be contemned. It is the same in spirit—made manifest by works—which so lately hurled Louis Phillippe from the throne of France, and drove him, exiled, to another land to die; which more recently braved in Hungary, the terrors of Russian and Austrian arms and power, and but for treachery would have triumphed; and which as recently, caused the German Principalities to quake, and their princes to tremble on their castled heights; and which will yet dash them down, to feel the terrors of the fall! All this was and will be done to gain, as a means, but what Americans now hold—the elective franchise. Having obtained this, do you suppose the Frenchman, the Magyar, or the German would starve, or live in pittance-servitude, simply because elective rulers said he must? No—nor, having it, will Americans do either, only because *you* may say they must; when they can so easily, and without blood or struggle, force you from the stage of power!

To afford you a manifestation of this, they carried, in two short months from the last adjournment, one-tenth of this Union by storm. But it was a calm storm—no swords, no bayonets, no cannon, or musketry. The soldiery were those who live by labor, and who desire but labor and wages that they may live. Armed with the dreadful ballot—but dreadful to oppression only—they marched to what gold-plated conservatism thought its impregnable rampart; fired but one round—and that scarcely heard at the time; but some of the enemy who fell behind that rampart were not ignorant of what hurt them. I said, in my speech of last session, there should be a petition here, at this, which “would be heeded.” You have it in the political results I have mentioned. Neglect the admonition if you *will*—but you *cannot* but at your *peril*. It is a death-toll warning in your ear, that *you* too,

“*Have ta'en too little care of this!*”





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 027 331 600 0